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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ROME 000904

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DEPT FOR NEA, EUR/WE AND S/I

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TAGS: [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [EAID](#) [IZ](#) [IT](#) [UNSC](#) [IRAQI](#) [FREEDOM](#) [ITALY](#) [NATIONAL](#) [ELECTIONS](#)  
SUBJECT: IRAQ: ITALIAN MFA SAYS PRT MOVING AHEAD REGARDLESS  
OF ELECTION OUTCOME

REF: A. STATE 44648

[B](#). BAGHDAD 500

[C](#). ROME 239

[D](#). ROME 583

[E](#). ROME 839

Classified By: Pol M/C David D. Pearce for Reasons 1.4 (a), (b) and (d)

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) Italy's Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Dhi Qar province will be fully operational by the end of April. MFA officials are confident that, barring an unexpectedly large vote for the extreme left in Italy's April 9 election, a center-left election victory will not affect the current planning, which foresees 15 to 20 civilian experts and 600 to 800 military staffing the PRT, including Italian force protection and security trainers. As Italy continues to draw down its military contingent, it will be able to devote more funds to its civilian reconstruction mission/PRT. Italy will not be able to increase its contributions to NTM-I in the near term, as it concentrates on standing up the PRT. End summary.

PRT Operational by End of April...

[1](#)2. (C) Pol-Mil Counselor and PolOff met March 21 with MFA NATO Office Director Gianni Bardini and Iraq Task Force officer Stefano Stucci to discuss Italy's progress in standing up a PRT in Dhi Qar province. Stucci said the PRT should be fully operational in five to six weeks and will include 15 to 20 civilian experts from Italy, the U.S. (three) and possibly Romania and Australia. Four Italian experts are already on the ground and the PRT leader, Dr. Troiano, departs for Iraq March 29. 600-800 Italian military will provide security and continue Carabinieri training for Iraqi security forces. Bardini said Italy remains open to training Iraqis from other provinces at its facility in Dhi Qar and to putting the Carabinieri training under a NATO umbrella. Although Italy continues to favor expanding the NATO Training Mission in Iraq (NTM-I), Italy will not be able to increase its contributions in the near term while it focuses its efforts on the PRT.

...and Poised to Continue Even Under Center-Left Government

[1](#)3. (C) Both Bardini and Stucci were confident that, regardless of who wins Italy's April 9 elections, the PRT will move forward. Only if the extreme left wins twenty or more percent of the vote would the mission be at risk, Stucci said. The PRT is a "bipartisan" initiative publicly supported by President Ciampi, and there is consensus on all sides that it should be the "magnetic focus" of Italy's efforts to help rebuild Iraq. Bardini noted that the moderate center-left (Fassino, D'Alema, Rutelli) will want to avoid unnecessary clashes with the U.S. that would result from pulling back the PRT commitment. There is a "coinciding of interests" of Italy's center-right and center-left on the PRT, since the Italian mission already is transitioning from a military to a mainly civilian one, which is what the center-left would do if it were in power. Even the military personnel assigned to the PRT are not at risk of being withdrawn. There will be no Zapatero in Italy, Bardini stated confidently.

Shifting Resources From Military to Civilian Operations

[1](#)4. (C) Stucci was optimistic that in the second half of 2006, as more Italian military leave Iraq, funding for the mission will be redirected from the military deployment toward the PRT. (Parliament must approve the funding every six months, with the next vote occurring in June/July). Both confirmed that Italy will draw down another 1,000 soldiers in June, bringing Italy's troop presence in Dhi Qar province to approximately 1,600, approximately half of its original contingent of 3,200 troops. In terms of reconstruction efforts (Ref A), Stucci said Italy's PRT priorities for Dhi

Qar are infrastructure projects in the electricity, water, and health (with the Red Cross) sectors, public administration training/governance (which he called the highest priority), and promoting e-government. Italy already is running a marshland initiative sponsored by Italy's Environment Ministry and health sector projects in the Kurdish north. Stucci reconfirmed that Italy had disbursed nearly all of its Madrid pledge (Ref D).

15. (C) Stucci said Italy was considering the U.S. request that Italians supervise an Iraqi-run PRT in al-Muthanna province, but was unsure of the resource implications and worried it could stretch the Dhi Qar PRT too thin.

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